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Basic Kitten Care

Congratulations on the newest addition to your family! The purpose of this handout is to give you an overview of the care your new kitten may require. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask a technician or doctor.

Vaccinations:

- Panleukopenia, Viral Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus(FVRCP)- Often just called “distemper vaccine,” this important vaccine is given every 3-4 weeks until 14-16 weeks of age. It will be boosted 1 year later and then every 2-3 years depending on your cat’s exposure risks.
- Rabies- This vaccine is required by state law. It is given once after 12 weeks of age, and then repeated annually. Tri-County Animal Hospital uses *PureVax* vaccine, which is the only rabies vaccine developed just for cats. It provides protection without the need for additional adjuvants and chemical additives, which can increase the risk of side effects to our feline patients.
- Leukemia (FeLV) – This vaccine protects against the Feline Leukemia Virus. This virus can cause feline leukemia which is a contagious disease causing severe immunosuppression, leading to other serious diseases and infections.



It is given once after 12 weeks of age, and then boosted 3-4 weeks later. This vaccine is primarily given to outdoor cats and must be administered annually. All cats must be tested for the virus prior to receiving the vaccine.

Fecal (stool exam)

We strongly recommend checking a stool sample on your new kitten to identify any microscopic parasites that he/she may have. Intestinal parasites can cause problems such as vomiting, diarrhea, distended abdomen, and variable appetites. They are very common and easily treated. Some common pet parasites can rarely affect children so we recommend this inexpensive test be repeated every year.

Retrovirus (FeLV/FIV) Testing- ALL kittens should be tested for these two deadly diseases. Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV) and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) are both highly contagious and infectious diseases causing severe suppression of their immune system. These viruses may be transmitted from mother to her

offspring or between cats via blood and saliva. A simple blood test will tell us if your cat/kitten is infected or has been exposed. Outdoor cats should be tested annually.



Grooming

Kittens will typically groom themselves, but they should be brushed regularly. The more time you spend grooming your kitten, the easier it will become for you and them.

Certain breeds will require more frequent brushing or even visits to a groomer. Heavy mats and hair in the eyes can be uncomfortable and can create medical problems. You will need to cut his/her nails on a regular basis (monthly usually). We will be happy to show you the proper way to trim a cat's nails. If you need to bathe your kitten, use a shampoo approved for use on kittens. Make sure to avoid getting soap and water in their eyes and ears. Dry them off very well and keep them warm while they are damp.



Scratching

Scratching is a normal feline behavior. Although scratching does serve to shorten and condition the claws, the primary reasons that cats scratch are to mark their territory and to stretch. It is impractical and unfair to expect cats to stop scratching entirely. The best way to control this behavior is to provide scratching posts. Many different scratching posts are available for purchase or can be homemade. We recommend providing different types of posts to see which type your kitten/cat prefers. Cat nip may also be sprinkled onto the post to encourage them to use the appropriate posts for scratching. It is very important to trim your cat's nails regularly to limit their need to scratch. If you have any questions or are having problems, the staff of Tri-County

Animal Hospital will be happy to offer assistance.

Dental Care

Dental disease is one of the most common medical problems we see in cats. It is recommended that cats have their teeth brushed regularly using dog or cat toothpaste and a small, soft toothbrush. Only the outside surfaces of the teeth need to be brushed. This should take around 15 seconds a day and can greatly reduce dental calculi and bacteria (not to mention bad breath). Dental disease can lead to heart disease, kidney failure, liver disease, eye diseases and other problems.

Flea/Tick Control

Flea and tick control is now easier and safer than ever with some of the newer products available. It is much easier and less expensive to prevent these pests than to treat an infestation. There are many life threatening diseases in our area that are spread by both of these pests. These products should be used year-round. Please ask for more information on any product. Most products are approved for use on kittens over 8 weeks of age.

Feeding

Feed your new kitten 3 times a day. Try to avoid too much variety to diet. Kittens have sensitive intestinal tracts and will get diarrhea easily. There are many good diets available, choose one with a reputable name designed for kittens. DO NOT GIVE MILK to your kitten. Please refer to the Feline Diet handout for more information.



Spaying and Neutering

We recommend surgical alteration between 4 and 6 months of age in all kittens that will not be used for breeding. Please ask for details on the procedure and on the medical benefits to your cat.

Heartworm Disease

Heartworms are blood (not intestinal) parasites that are transmitted by mosquitoes. The parasites settle in the heart and lungs and can seriously debilitate your cat. Treatment is risky and involved, so it is best to prevent the disease. Outdoor cats should receive a  monthly topical treatment (Revolution) that kills immature worms. This is given year-round.

Medication

Avoid any medications without direct approval from your veterinarian. Many products that are safe in humans can be fatal to our pets.

